

Fitchburg Historical Society

MAY
1989



JUNE GENERAL MEETING

We are having a picnic in the park---as part of our June 11 general meeting. The picnic will begin at 1:30 p.m. in the park shelter, and following a brief business meeting, we will be honoring the first settlers in Fitchburg.

1989 marks the 150th year that the Vroman brothers---William, George and Joseph---began farming in Fitchburg. Though John Stoner started the first farm in Section 17 in 1837, he worked the farm during the week and returned to his Madison residence on week-ends, thus the Vromans are recognized as the first permanent settlers.

The afternoon will also include a program presented by Ellen Rulseh and Virginia Rose called "Aprons". Several Board members heard Ms. Rulseh present her collection of historic information and prose pieces on WHA radio and we thought the Society might enjoy this pleasant look back at aprons and the lives of the women who wore them.

Please bring a dish to pass, plates and silverware---plus any pictures or memorabilia you may in your family collections that relate to any of Fitchburg's early settlers. Coffee and lemonade will be provided. Since we are in McGaw Shelter we will meet "rain or shine", but keep your fingers crossed for sunshine.



ATTEND A CONFERENCE---WE'LL HELP.

At the May Board meeting it was noted that the Fitchburg Historical Society would like to encourage our members to attend conferences or workshops relating to historical matters or which would provide other valuable information to the Society. With that in mind the Board approved a motion that would allow members attending such events to be reimbursed for their registration fees. We do ask that you provide a report about the event, or copies of the information you received, to the Society. If there is an upcoming workshop or conference that interests you, contact a Board member for further information.

This arrangement just worked out best - I hope people are not too disappointed - Patricia

QUILT RAFFLE TICKETS

Tickets are now available for the Quilt Raffle being held in conjunction with the Historical Society's September Quilt Show. Arlene Ace and Margaret Eby are in charge of coordinating ticket sales. We will be offering tickets at the June 11 meeting, and also encouraging all members to take a book of ten tickets with them to sell to interested family and friends. Cost of a ticket is only \$1.00. We will be drawing the winning tickets on the last day of the Quilt Show---September 24.

First prize is a handmade quilt in the traditional "Fox and Geese" pattern. Second prize is two quilted pillows, and third prize is a cross-stitched quilt design.



MORE QUILTS

We need to get an idea of how many Historical Society members will be offering quilts for display on September 23 & 24. If you are planning to put a quilt or quilts in the show, please let Patricia Delker know either by calling her at 275-7141 or at the June 11 general meeting.



SOCIETY DONATES PLAQUE

The Historical Society has provided a plaque to mark the location at the Community Center of the "time capsule" presented to the City during the groundbreaking ceremony for the new building. The presentation occurred in September 1987, and the metal box was installed in the building in May 1988.

The "time capsule" included memorabilia from many Fitchburg organizations, plus special writings from individuals. The plaque will remind future generations of the existence of the collected material.

Where's it at you ask---upstairs, under the display case, across from the Fitchburg Room.





FITCHBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2421 West Hill Dr.
Fitchburg, WI 53711



"DOGTOWN SCHOOLHOUSE"

The Fish Hatchery School, commonly known as the "Dogtown Schoolhouse", may look a bit forlorn these days sitting along Fish Hatchery Road, just south of the Dellvue curve, but its future is about to look brighter.

At the May 25 Board of Directors meeting, Lyman McKee and Gary Gorman discussed the history and potential future of the building. Mr. McKee explained that the structure is in the pathway of the upcoming Fish Hatchery road improvements, and that he had been contacted by the Gorman family about moving the building to their property on Whalen Rd. for the purpose of restoring it. Mr. McKee thoughtfully decided to approach the Historical Society first, knowing the schoolhouse had attracted the attention of the Society in the past.

The Board discussed several options regarding the building, but because the restoration costs had once been estimated at \$10,000 and the Historical Society had no immediate source of funding at that level, it was decided that we would endorse the Gorman's restoration plans.

Mr. Gorman, who understood the public interest in the building, also stated that when restoration was complete, the Historical Society would be allowed reasonable access to the schoolhouse for meetings or other gatherings. He also noted he was very interested in learning about the history of the building and finding old pictures or other records of the schoolhouse.

The Historical Society Board indicated our interest in assisting in this area of the restoration project. A committee will be formed to begin the research. If you are interested in the project, or have information to share about the "Dogtown Schoolhouse" please contact a Board member by phone or at the upcoming general meeting.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that a building now located in Fitchburg once helped the trains run on time?

The Oscar Mayer Observatory, which was moved from the UW campus to Fitchburg around 1960, housed not only telescopes, but also a meridian transit, which was used to astronomically measure time. It was the most accurate means of measuring time until the twentieth century invention of the atomic clock.

Telephone lines ran from the observatory, then located on the shores of Lake Mendota, to some of the railroads such as the Chicago & Northwestern and the Illinois Central, to provide them with the correct time.

After being moved to the Bjorksten property (now Fitchburg Research Park), the building was used by the Madison Astronomical Society for meetings and stargazing until 1985 when the "light pollution" from the metropolitan area, and the building's old age, made it impractical to use the structure any longer.

reprinted in part from an
article by Ed Treleven in
the 1/28/88 Fitchburg Star.

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THANK YOU

The Historical Society would like to thank member Shiela Reaves for presenting the program at the April general meeting. Shiela's slide presentation was based on her book Wisconsin: Pathways to Prosperity. The slides and commentary provided insights into such Wisconsin industries as farming, fur-trading, logging, brewing beer and cheesemaking. Thank you Shiela!



WHAT'S IN YOUR STORAGE SHED?

Connie Darling is still looking for old tools, small farm machinery or agricultural related items to be used as part of the next display in the Community Center display case. Any item that has to do with Fitchburg's early settlers could be used in the exhibit. If you can help, please call Connie at 274-5375.